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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5219
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001442

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EG](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN: "SURPRISING" OVERTURE TO EGYPT BY AHMEDINEJAD

REF: A. 06 CAIRO 7208
[1](#)B. 06 CAIRO 7008
[1](#)C. 06 CAIRO 5032 EXDIS

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Wire services reported late on May 15 that Iranian President Ahmedinejad, upon return from a visit to Oman and the Emirates, responded to an Egyptian reporter's question by saying Tehran was prepared to restore full diplomatic relations with Egypt that "very day" were the Egyptian government prepared to do so. According to MFA Cabinet staff member responsible for Asian affairs, Motaz Zahran, Egypt is not yet prepared, as Cairo's key concerns have yet to be addressed by Iran. The move, however, was "surprising," Zahran said, since Ahmedinejad represented the hard-line faction in the Iranian government that has opposed conciliatory gestures toward Egypt.

[1](#)2. (C) Zahran advised poloff to read the Egyptian foreign minister's public response carefully. Our minister stated that Ahmedinejad's comments were "positive," that the GOE welcomed this kind of approach, and that Egypt stood ready to discuss the matter wherever circumstances permit. In our minds, Zahran said, "there is nothing urgent or immediate" in this respect. "Our foreign ministers have frequent opportunities to meet on the sidelines of multilateral meetings: when that happens, we'll be ready to listen and see" what the other side has to say.

[1](#)3. (C) Seeking to downplay the significance of the mutual public gestures, Zahran said that the relationship remained hampered by several "sticking points." Those points are "still sticking," he added. We have told them that unless our issues of concern are addressed, including security concerns, the relationship will remain as it is. Asked what security concerns he was referring to, Zahran said "they have their noses in our internal domestic affairs: we don't like it and want them to completely cut it out. They also have people that we want." These issues, he clarified, were dealt with by other GOE agencies. So far, the Iranians have not seriously considered or responded to our concerns: we doubt there will be any movement absent more favorable treatment of those concerns." Offering his own analysis, Zahran concluded by noting the apparent shift in GOI strategy toward the Arab neighbors. Tehran, he believed, was trying to regularize its relations with everyone in the region, and especially targeting Egypt.
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